



ROKPA UK

ANNUAL REVIEW 2008

A Message from our President Dr Akong Tulku Rinpoche

Our work is constantly changing in response to the needs of those we support. Education is still our priority for Tibetans in China, but our work has evolved as our students go onto further education.

The emphasis on Tibetan culture has taken on a new direction as we hasten to identify places of spiritual importance before they are forgotten. The Buddhist images that are being erected will give hope and inspiration to people who will be drawn to these from far and wide, and by bringing pilgrims and tourists to the area will help improve local economies.

Saving endangered Tibetan medicinal herbs is becoming increasingly urgent as this ancient tradition becomes ever more popular throughout China and now increasingly in the West, putting local herbs and healthcare in jeopardy. The wellbeing of the Tibetan people is uppermost in our minds and being one of the only organisations now working in these areas, we strive to respond to their needs in a holistic way.

In Zimbabwe the Positive Living programme combined with food support is proving very beneficial for the people involved. The training of a combination of physical and mental skills is proving life saving for those in Zimbabwe and South Africa. The groups are in turn passing on their knowledge and support to others in the community.

Your help has allowed us to make a difference to so many lives over the years and the many thousands of Tibetans who have benefited are deeply grateful. Now, with the current economic situation, times are hard for many of us in the West, but even more so for those we support, everywhere.

Akong Tulku Rinpoche

Dr. Akong Tulku Rinpoche
President



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Lea Wyler, ROKPA Vice-President
and Nepal Project Manager.

Who we are & What we do

Founded in 1980 by our President Dr Akong Tulku Rinpoche together with Lea Wyler, the Vice President of ROKPA and her father Dr. Veit Wyler, ROKPA is a **non-political** international charity that is **run almost entirely by volunteers**.

Since 1980, ROKPA has established **18 branches around the world**, each of which has legal charitable status in its own country or region. With most of our administrators and fundraisers being volunteers, we are **very cost effective**, so that the funds we receive have the maximum and most efficient impact possible. Fundraising and administration costs are generally 10%, **with 90% of donations going to the projects**.

Ever since it was founded, ROKPA has endeavoured to use a large proportion of the money donated for long-term education including school programmes for street children, training projects for illiterate adults and occupational training for single mothers.

ROKPA's aim is to help people in need, regardless of nationality or religion and to give practical help and sustainable assistance to individuals and communities so as to improve their lives and help them become more self-supporting.

In order to achieve this goal, ROKPA concentrates on **education and healthcare**, seeing them as a necessary foundation for bringing improvements to people's lives. Alongside this, ROKPA recognises the importance of **culture and the environment** and also seeks to give aid where no long-term solution is possible. ROKPA stresses the importance of helping each person to develop their individual skills and try to offer the most suitable vocational or academic education.

In general ROKPA does not measure its success simply in terms of numbers of projects or countries supported, but instead looks at the number of people it has helped, many from an early age, **who are now helping others**.

ROKPA is able to work in some of the most remote and difficult regions of the world, such as the **Tibetan regions of China** and **Zimbabwe**, locations with extremely low income environments and well publicised political difficulties. Other areas in which we work include **South Africa, Nepal and India**, as well as parts of **Europe including the UK**.

ROKPA's core approach is to work through **collaborative projects established jointly with the local communities and where possible, local authorities**. This highly localised approach to starting projects, means that the most appropriate and sensitive solution for the local region is found.

In the words of our motto, ROKPA seeks to **"help where help is needed"**, but we do this in the full knowledge that the people we work with are fully capable of helping themselves, and that all they need are the resources to make this possible.

ROKPA - working for people of all ages, by providing **food**:



education and care:



healthcare:



preserving the culture:

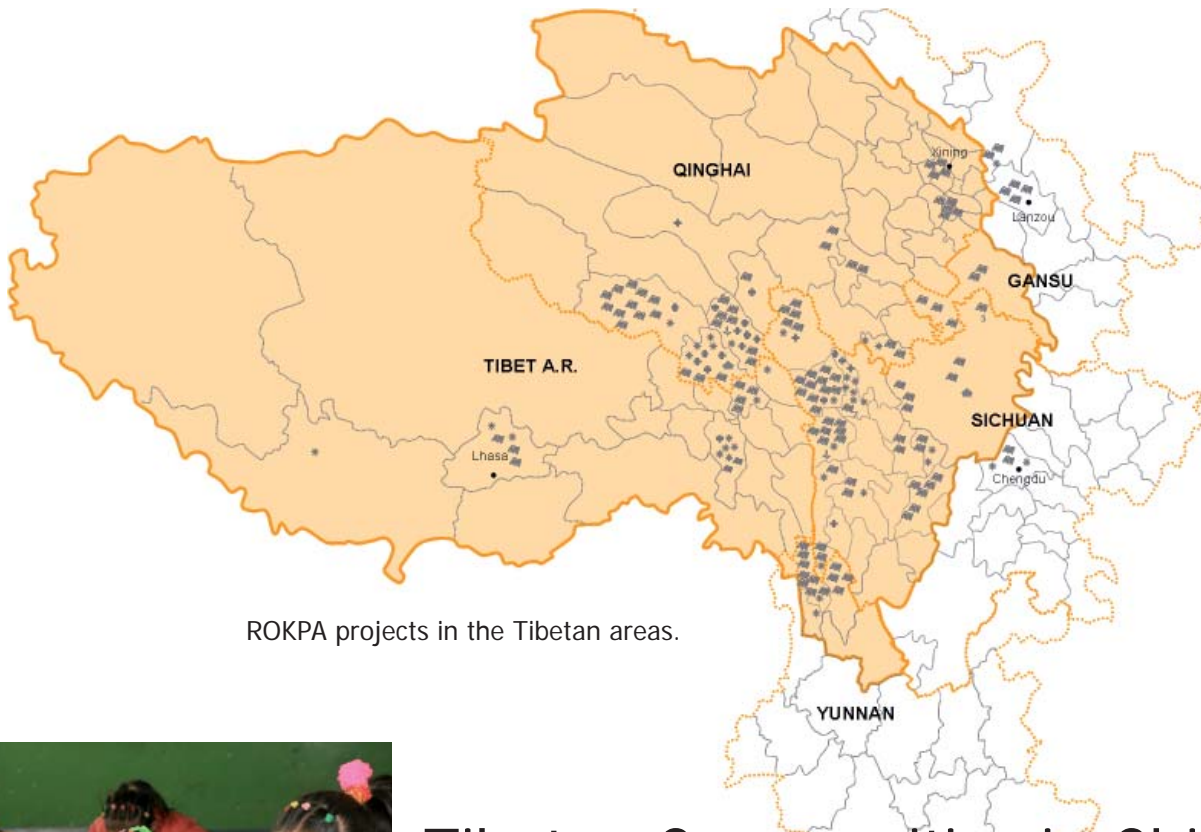


the environment:



and training in self-sufficiency.





ROKPA projects in the Tibetan areas.

Tibetan Communities in China



Some students still need to share a book. More help is needed to fund the many classes we support - now nearly one hundred. ROKPA supports over 4,000 children and young people at school.



At least in school, ROKPA children have regular meals, but costs are now high and funding needs to be increased.



This is Dr. Gyantse. He was a ROKPA student at our Yushu Orphanage - an orphan nomad child. Sponsored by ROKPA, he graduated as a Tibetan Doctor, and is now a very popular, very competent doctor in Zatu. He is now married with a child, a home and an income!

Since 1991, when ROKPA funded its first school and health clinic, there have been many developments in the Tibetan areas. The few main roads have been tarred and towns have increased in size, both with people settling from outwith the Tibetan area and also more recently, with an influx from the countryside of farmers and nomads giving up their way of life.

In most rural areas, however, life has hardly changed. Nomads and farmers struggle to survive, supplementing their meagre income by harvesting caterpillar grass, which is sold for its medicinal properties. The difficult conditions, expensive or non-existent healthcare and the intense cold in winter have resulted in there being many orphans and families with only one parent. On top of these existing problems, during the last 5 years, costs have increased quite dramatically making food expensive.

Central Government's aim for all children to be in school is now visibly making a difference, with small schools in many villages. The new law states that all children between the ages of 7 and 16 should be in school until the completion of lower middle school. During these nine years, the government provides facilities, pays teachers and gives some support for the children's food. All other costs have to be met by the local education authority or the parents, including an annual fee which must be paid by children attending the middle school. As a result, children in some schools in the poorer areas do not have enough food or clothing.

Education

ROKPA's aim is to provide an education for Tibetan children, which is both

Type and Number of Projects

Education	89
Healthcare	17
Environment	1
Cultural	20
Care for elderly	2

Facts and figures

Population: 2.62 million
Gross domestic product (per capita and year): £108
Life expectancy: 60
Infant mortality (under age 5 per 1,000): 35
Ongoing projects in 2008: 129
Project expenses in 2008: £ 1,817,900
Number of direct beneficiaries: 7262

consistent with their own culture and gives them a good start in life. With no other support above lower middle school, we are the only hope these young adults have to reach their academic potential. Even now, at primary level in the poorer districts, there are still many children who rely upon our extra support in order to make their education possible or bearable.

In every school where ROKPA supports children, it encourages the **teaching of Tibetan, Tibetan singing and dance, care of the environment** as well as the teaching of **vocational skills** such as Tibetan crafts. Learning these skills has meant that many school leavers have been able to enter trades and earn a good living. ROKPA has also introduced training in **traditional Tibetan medicine** at higher middle school level and beyond.

Health

Healthcare is still rare in most rural and farming areas. Patients need to be transported to the nearest town, often far away and where the cost may be too high for most people. For centuries **Tibetan Medicine** has been used in the Tibetan areas. It is affordable and made from local natural resources.

Over the last 15 years, ROKPA has **trained over 600 Tibetan medical doctors** and **48 doctors to the European standard of Herbal Medicine Practitioner**. Some have been helped to set up clinics in their own communities and others now work in government funded hospitals and clinics. This has helped to provide some needed help in rural areas, but there is still a long way to go. ROKPA also supports 17 Tibetan **medical clinics**, contributing towards the cost of medicines for those who cannot afford to pay.

Culture

Central Government has long since allowed ethnic minorities to practice their culture and religion. ROKPA encourages the children we support to **wear Tibetan dress, speak Tibetan and to be proud of their heritage**. However, there are few well qualified Tibetan teachers, and much of the teaching is now in Chinese. In response to this, ROKPA is funding the training of Tibetan teachers, especially in the areas where the language has all but disappeared.

In spite of the growing power of Western culture and economic influences, the Buddhist cultural heritage is still the backbone of the lives of most Tibetans. However, without financial support, the monastic educational standards have been low. ROKPA has responded by supporting **the training of Buddhist Philosophy** to the highest level, the training in **Tibetan crafts and skills** and also **establishing sites of historic interest**. These will not only safeguard landmarks of Tibetan history, but will provide places for pilgrimage and tourism, which is becoming an increasingly important source of employment.

Environment

Our work is now focused on the urgent need to save a number of **medicinal plants from extinction**. The present worldwide popularity of natural healing methods has revived the use of **traditional Tibetan Medicine**, but at the same time is threatening its very existence. There has been a massive increase in harvesting with extraction of the whole plant, rather than only the necessary part. ROKPA is responding by starting one of its most challenging initiatives to date: a project with the initial time frame of 10 years (2008-2018) which will establish a **new model of Tibetan Herbal Medicine production**, one capable of supporting local enterprise

Costs

- Education at a Middle School for one orphan (includes clothing) per month - £47
- University education for one year - £2,907
- Advanced training as a doctor in Tibetan medicine - £872
- Treatment from a local Tibetan doctor, including natural medicines - £29



Tibetan medicinal herbs, hung to dry.



The lay community at Tanag, with traditional scarves to welcome us.



ROKPA supported orphans at Chodrak Primary School.



Internal decoration in the traditional Tibetan style. ROKPA encourages the training of traditional crafts, to give students a trade.

Nepal



A volunteer, serving at the Soup Kitchen.



Being cared for and caring for each other in the Children's Home.



The new Guesthouse, now ready for rent or timeshare. The income will help support the Children at the Home, and their education.



The Women's Workshop has at last become self-supporting.

In spite of a new government and some increased stability, economic growth in Nepal, which depends almost exclusively on tourism, remains slow. It is still one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world, with almost one-third of its population living below the poverty line. Since 2006, the cost of food has doubled, unemployment is 46% and 51.4% of adults are illiterate, most of these being women. Women marry early but the difficulties caused by extreme poverty frequently results in the husband abandoning the family, leaving them with no means of supporting themselves or their children.

In Kathmandu ROKPA gives new life and hope to the poor, homeless and deprived through a yearly **Soup Kitchen and Medical Tent, a Women's Workshop and a Children's Home for former streetkids.**

The **ROKPA Soup Kitchen**, lasting from mid-December to early March, gives out two meals a day and also provides emergency healthcare. Many of those who come for food are children or mothers who have great difficulty supporting their families.

For those who have no one to care for them, or whose parents cannot manage, **The Children's Home**, near the Great Stupa, have taken in nearly 100 children since it opened in 1991, providing them with a caring home and sending them to school. The Home is run by local people, which guarantees the upbringing of the children within their own culture.

A former ROKPA child manages the **Women's Workshop** where attractive items are made and sold. In 2008 this project became self-supporting for the first time! Many orders from western companies and organizations contributed to this successful development. Items can be ordered online at **www.rokpa.org**.

The acceptance of children into the home is often a traumatic experience for both parent and child, but they are helped through it by the natural and overwhelming support of the children already living there. This quality of warmth and care seems to be imbued in all the children in the home, something which also seems to be true of the children in our Tibetan orphanages. We believe it is important that the older children look after the younger ones. That creates strong ties – like a family.

We place a lot of importance on a good education, but as our children do not have their parents to guide them, we take responsibility for their moral upbringing. We try and show them through our own conduct how to behave and help other people – in a caring way without preaching.

The recently opened **ROKPA Guesthouse**, also managed by Ram Hari, the former ROKPA child, offers studio apartments for rent or timeshare. This property, near the Children's Home, has been refurbished into 10 single and 4 double room apartments. This venture will help the Home become more self-supporting and safeguard its future. To find out more or make a booking, go to **www.rokpaguesthouse.org**.

Facts and Figures

Population: 28.1 million
Gross national product (per person annually): £216
Life expectancy: 64
Child mortality rate (for 1000 children under 5): 55
Current ROKPA projects: 6
Total project costs: £ 300,100

Costs

A meal for 400 people - £49
Food & medical care for an entire winter - £196
Education and loving care for a street child at the Home - £1,570/annum
An life saving operation - £390



Former street children at the childrens' home in Nepal.



Attending the ROKPA Centre, in Harare, Zimbabwe.



Among the Tibetan people.



Zimbabwe



Support being arranged at the Centre.



AIDS Prevention Group relaxing after the session.



Disadvantaged young adults on a four day life skills camp. Support and training is provided in a fun way.



Kudzi, whose unemployed father is supported by ROKPA, to care for him.

The last year has been marked by changes and challenges for the country and for **ROKPA Support Network Zimbabwe (RSNZ)**. Because of a government suspension of all NGO activities from before the election period, ROKPA had to suspend operations or risk permanent closure, until late September 2008. Even with the suspension lifted, our work still has to proceed with caution. The formation of an inclusive government has created some hope of change, but the future remains very unpredictable.

The continued economic instability and hyperinflation has also made our work extremely difficult and even basic survival impossible for an ever-increasing number of people. The scrapping of the Zimbabwe dollar in February 2009 in favour of the US dollar and the South African Rand, has made life easier for some but even more desperate for others, especially in the rural areas. The cholera epidemic has eased with a change in weather but is predicted to return.

RSN is involved with development work **for the underprivileged that includes the homeless, the chronically ill – who have HIV/AIDS, TB and cholera - parents of disabled children, the disabled children themselves, caregivers of orphans, orphan-headed families, and other people who are destitute.**

We provide help in a number of different ways:

- Food and medicine assistance.
- HIV and AIDS prevention, care and support.
- Training in nutrition and gardening.
- Entrepreneurial skills development.
- Life skills and psychosocial support.
- The 'drop-in' and referral centre.
- Support with school fees.

This range of projects allows us to provide a holistic approach to the people we work with, in Harare and two rural areas. Our strength is in our ability to address not only people's physical and material needs but also their psychosocial needs. We also put an emphasis on training people to become self-sufficient through courses in nutrition, gardening and small business management.

Currently, over 1,600 people are directly benefiting through our projects - a drop in the ocean. There are waiting lists for all our programmes and it is heartbreaking when, because of shortages, we have to turn people away.

Our goal for 2009–2010 is to expand our programmes so we can help many more, but to do this we need bigger premises for our work and storage.

Facts and Figures

Population: 13.4 million
Gross national product per annum: £209
Life expectancy: 43
Child mortality rate (for 1000 children under 5): 90
Current projects: 7
Total project costs: £34,250
Number of beneficiaries: 1,631

Costs during 2008

Food - £4,500
Training in gardening - £2,700
Fun days for disabled children - £1,125
Income generating programmes - £600
HIV/AIDS prevention training - £1,900
Positive Living programme - £2,100

South Africa

In rural Groot Marico, the ROKPA Centre provides training and employment for a few of the small local population, most of which have HIV and are unemployed. Volunteers have built a crèche and **funds are needed to pay the two teachers and the daily nutritious food provided**, often the only meal the children receive. The aim in the longer term is to build better **environmentally friendly housing** for the approximately 40 households who currently live in corrugated iron or reed shacks.

In Johannesburg, the Soup Kitchen provides **300 meals a week** to the destitute and unemployed people in the inner city. This has been very difficult and chaotic at times because of the high demand especially from Zimbabwean refugees. In 2008, an organic garden was started that now provides fresh vegetables for the meals. ROKPA also sponsors the **education and training** of students from disadvantaged backgrounds as well as **small scale business start up projects** for unemployed people.



Queuing for food in Johannesburg.



Children at the new Creche at Groot Marico.

Volunteering - In the UK & overseas

ROKPA projects would not exist except for the generosity of our donors and the hard work and dedication of the many people in the West who work and raise funds for us.

Everyone who works for ROKPA in the UK as well the vast majority of staff at branch offices throughout the world, are volunteers. We have a fund of ideas, experience and fund-raising material that we can help with, so we are glad to work with anyone who offers their help.

Volunteers can also help overseas at some of our projects. These include: the **annual free Western Medical Clinic, and the annual Eye Clinic**, both of which take on health professionals. These are at Yushu in southern Qinghai, and provide free treatments over a two to three week period during the summer.

Volunteers have been going to **teach English** at our Orphanage in Yushu since 1995 and have made a huge difference to the fortunes of many of the children who have graduated (see over). TEFL training is needed in order to teach at any of the three projects in the Tibetan areas where this is now possible.

In Nepal, volunteers can help to **serve the destitute at the Soup Kitchen**. This project usually takes place between Christmas and early March.

For information on any of these placements, please get in touch with us at ROKPA UK.



English teacher, Natalie, with students at the teachers' flat at Yushu Orphanage.



Ophthalmologist, patient and translator at the Eye Clinic.

ROKPA in the UK



Droni with her award.

Education for Tibetans in the UK

For those who know enough English, the experience of a Western culture and training can have far reaching consequences. Students broaden their experience and skills and improve their job prospects in Tibetan China.

ROKPA UK has hosted 10 Tibetan students who have all returned to work in Tibetan areas.

The main focus during 2008 was the continuation and development of the ROKPA **Horticulture Training Programme** in Edinburgh. This is to provide Tibetan students with the essential skills needed to establish and develop nurseries in their home mountain areas and is the first phase of a project to re-introduce endangered Tibetan Medical plants back into the wild in Tibetan areas.

During the year, ROKPA worked with four Edinburgh colleges and the Royal Botanic Garden (RBGE) to assist five young Tibetans gain further education. All five are former students of ROKPA's Tibetan Yushu Orphanage and are Tibetan Medical Doctors.

One student focussed mostly on improving her English for the year. She excelled at this and then returned home in the summer where she took up her post as a Tibetan doctor and used her English language skills to work closely with ROKPA personnel as an interpreter and translator.

Two other students completed their initial horticulture training at RBGE and one then returned home. The other, Droni (pictured) was awarded the RBGE Certificate of Horticulture and the Student Achievement of the Year Award. Now, after a further year's English course she is to take a degree in Horticulture at the Scottish Agriculture College in 2009.

Two other students, (pictured) arrived in August 2008 after 9 months training in Germany on a bio-dynamic farm, an agriculture system that seems most closely aligned to the principles and values of the production of traditional Tibetan medicine. They took up one-year English language courses at the Institute of Applied Language Studies and The Wallace College and will take up their horticulture training again in September 2009.

None of this would be possible without the generosity of the colleges in providing fee waivers, of Edinburgh citizens in giving them accommodation and the generosity and dedication of a team of ROKPA volunteers and supporters in Edinburgh.

It is ROKPA's intention to make many further opportunities for Tibetans to study in the UK if funds can be found.

Help for the homeless in Glasgow

Under the umbrella of ROKPA Trust, volunteers prepare and distribute food for the homeless in Glasgow. **Glasgow Soup Kitchen** has been in operation since 1985, co-ordinated by the Simon Community for homeless people. Its main activity is distributing food in Glasgow city centre up to three nights per week, depending on the availability of other providers. All the food used is either donated, or bought using donated funds.

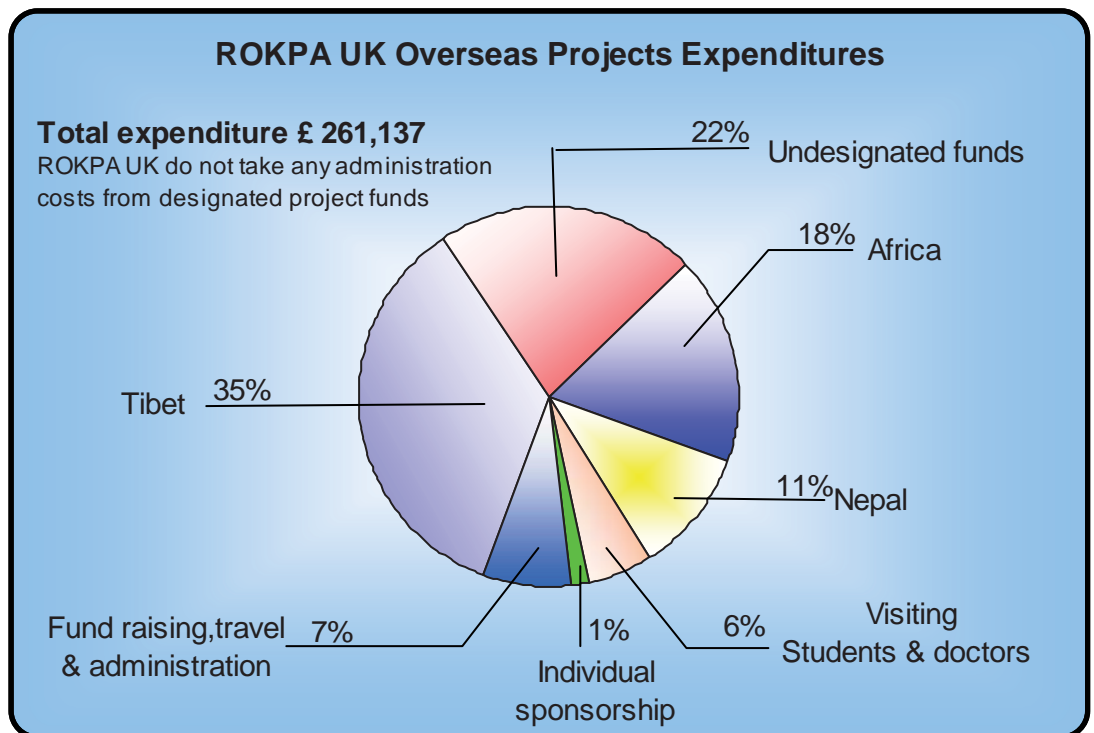
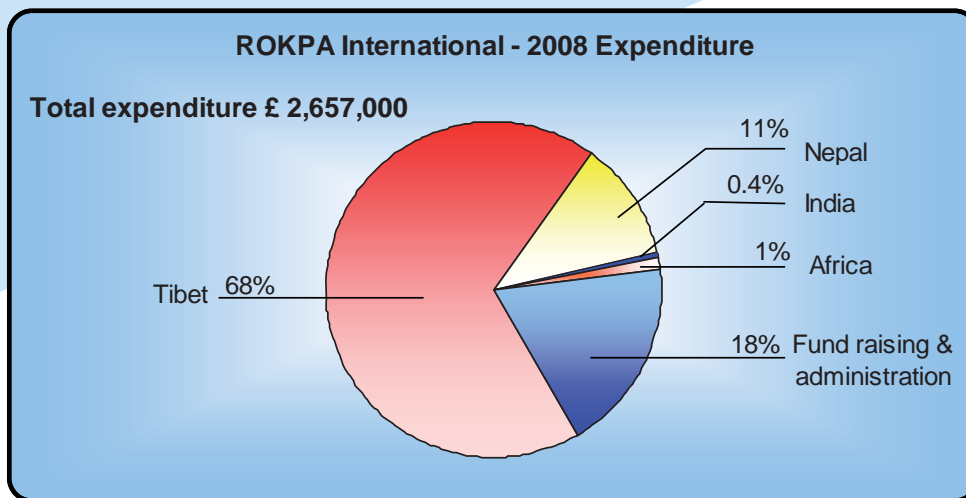


L to R: Tenpa, Claire McNaughton, Palden and Droni.



Chunga Lhamo, previously at ROKPA's orphanage school in Yushu and now a Tibetan Medical Doctor, with ROKPA ambassador Charles Dance, at an event in London.

Finances



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 Sino-British Fellowship Trust
 Jeanette Charitable Fund

Tula Trust
 Weston Beamor Ltd
 Wildlife Outreach Network
 The Scottish Agricultural College, Edinburgh
 Apex Foundation
 The Wallace College
 Institute of Applied Language Studies (IALS)
 Jewel and Esk College
 Royal Botanical Gardens Edinburgh.



Help us support a child
through education and give
them a chance to reach their
full potential.

ROKPA UK Overseas Projects

Kagyu Samye Ling
Eskdalemuir, Langholm
Dumfries & Galloway DG13 0QL

0044 (0)13873 73232 Ext 230
charity@rokpauk.org
www.rokpauk.org

ROKPA in Edinburgh Diana Dodd: edinburgh@rokpa.org - Tel: 0131 652 1316
ROKPA in London Oli Borisova: london@rokpa.org - Tel: 07799261061

ROKPA UK is part of ROKPA Trust, a registered charity. ROKPA Trust was set up in 1995 and is the umbrella organisation for its spiritual, therapeutic and humanitarian activities. Rokpa UK Overseas Projects was established in 1997.

ROKPA UK raises funds on behalf of ROKPA, an international aid organisation. It also supports the education in the UK, of students from the overseas projects. The main focus is on supporting projects supplying education, health and other development assistance for Tibetans within China. Also provided is emergency and development help to the destitute in Nepal, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

ROKPA associated branches

Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Finland, Germany,
Holland, India, Ireland, Italy, Nepal, Poland, South Africa,
Spain, Switzerland, UK, USA, Zimbabwe.

Headquarters: ROKPA International. Böcklinstrasse 27, CH-8032 Zürich, Switzerland. www.rokpa.org

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ROKPA

www.rokpauk.org
charity@rokpauk.org

Helping Where Help Is Needed.